

Editors

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Creative Negotiations. Romania – America 1920 -1940

Presa Universitară Clujeană

**Creative negotiations.
Romania–America 1920–1940**

Sonia D. Andraş • Roxana Mihaly
(Editors)

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Garçonne, but Make Her Flapper. Using American Femininity Models to Re-Fashion the Romanian ‘Modern Girl’

Sonia D. Andras

This paper follows cultural negotiations through fashion and beauty between Romania and America. This dialogue occurred almost entirely via Paris materially and symbolically in the interwar era. Especially in terms of culture and fashion, Paris functioned as a nexus where Parisian models, ideas, and fashion icons, some of Romanian origin, were equally disseminated in Europe and across the Atlantic. Unlike other non-Western influence locations, Romanian women adopted Western fashions decades, even centuries, before men started replacing Ottoman attires with “German” suits since the mid-nineteenth century.¹ But this did not mean Romanian women were more emancipated than their Western counterparts. The early-twentieth-century practical and revolutionary feminist rebellion incorporated or copied masculine fashions, as seen with the 1920s boyish flapper or *garçonne*. As historian Lucy Moore described her, the flapper was “a chick desperately flapping her wings as she tried to fly, although she had not yet grown adult feathers.”² Flappers most often did so by adapting them to their gendered prescriptions, thus preventing

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¹ Constantin Oros, *Pagini din istoria costumului* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1998), 146–7.

² Lucy Moore, *Anything Goes: A Biography of the Roaring Twenties* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 61.

severe disturbances in the system.³ The flapper's appearance contrasted with the haute couture romantic Jeanne Lanvin creations with an eighteenth-century inspiration, alongside the Egyptomania sparked by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, which added to voting rights for women who, as Tiffany Webber put it, proceeded to "cut their hair short and showed off their legs."⁴ In an American context, according to Moore, the flapper could best be illustrated by Zelda Fitzgerald, with all her positive and negative traits, as seen in the novels penned by her husband, F. Scott Fitzgerald.⁵ In terms of fashion, the flapper's "unrestricted and boyish" look was marked by a significant reduction of fabrics used in dressmaking, from underwear to outfits and accessories.⁶ In Romania's case, this aesthetic, cultural, and social undressing would be somewhat redressed by the times of the new interwar and Communist women.

Owing to the fluidity of terminology, some clarification is needed as relevant academic and journalistic literature uses various combinations of the terms "new," "modern," "girl," or woman as general references to early-twentieth-century women. In Romanian history during modernity, the main character is the modern girl, the "undressing" half of the interwar equation, known in a French context as *garçonne* and an Anglo-Saxon one as flapper. While the two terms have been interchangeable, their use in French or English can imply a propensity towards any of these spheres. I use the term modern girl specifically for the 1920s Romanian woman, whose image blended various Western, European, national, and local streams. The modern girl's contrasting symbols, the 1930s new woman⁷ followed by the new Communist woman, represent the "(re-)dressing" other half towards more recent history.

³ Jo B. Paoletti and Claudia Brush Kidwell, "Men and Women: Dressing the Part," in *The Fashion Reader*, eds. Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2014), (202–4) 202.

⁴ Tiffany Webber, "The Modern Era: 1910–1960," in Welters, Lillethun, *The Fashion Reader* (See Note 2), 88.

⁵ Moore, *Anything Goes*, 61.

⁶ *Ibid.* 65.

⁷ See Sonia D. Andraş, "From Monitorul Oficial to Calea Victoriei: Decoding 1930s Bucharest through Women's Fashion," *Journal of Romanian Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 25, 2023): 27–54, <https://doi.org/10.3828/jrns.2023.3>.

Being an informed disciplinary study as described by Lisa R. Lattuca,⁸ this chapter is neither evaluative nor hierarchical but focuses on the research question type and needs outreach to other fields. In the context of this chapter, the fashion studies-centric methodological system branches out to cultural and social history, semiotics, and cultural studies besides fashion studies, including gender, media, and urban studies. The research integrates geography, history, and cultural studies on Bucharest, Greater Romania, and Central and East Europe. Its main themes stem from 1920s women's fashion into issues of gender, urban culture and infrastructure, modernity, capitalism, industrialism, and consumerism. It thus adds the Romanian cultural, social, and aesthetic space to the larger discussion on post-World War One gendered revolutions, culminating with the rebellious flapper of the so-called "roaring twenties." The research introduces Romania into the literature focusing on fashion on the Paris-New York route,⁹ the relationship between fashion and politics,¹⁰ the evolution of *prêt-à-porter*,¹¹ or silent movie stardom.¹² It introduces fashion to relevant English-language academic works focusing on Romania's cultural and diplomatic relations with the USA,¹³ cultural politics and national identity,¹⁴ feminism,¹⁵ or the textile industry.¹⁶

⁸ Lisa R. Lattuca, "Creating Interdisciplinarity: Grounded Definitions from College and University Faculty," *History of Intellectual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2003): (1–20) 5–6.

⁹ Véronique Pouillard, *Paris to New York: The Transatlantic Fashion Industry in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2021).

¹⁰ Djurdja Bartlett, ed., *Fashion and Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019).

¹¹ Amy De La Haye, "The Dissemination of Design from Haute Couture to Fashionable Ready-to-Wear during the 1920s with Specific Reference to the Hodson Dress Shop in Willenhall," *Textile History* 24, no. 1 (January 1993): 39–48, <https://doi.org/10.1179/004049693793712196>.

¹² Agata Frymus, *Damsels and Divas: European Stardom in Silent Hollywood* (Ithaca: Rutgers University Press, 2020); Patrice Petro, ed., *Idols of Modernity: Movie Stars of the 1920s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

¹³ Flaviu Vasile Rus, *The Cultural and Diplomatic Relations Between Romania and the United States of America: 1880–1920: Documents* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2018).

¹⁴ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Mihaela Miroiu, "An Exotic Island: Feminist Philosophy in Romania," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 233–39, <https://doi.org/10.1086/590438>.

¹⁶ Magdalena Buchczyk, "To Weave Or Not To Weave: Vernacular Textiles and Historical Change in Romania," *Textile* 12, no. 3 (November 2014): 328–45, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183514X14156359536980>.

A Quickstep to Freedom

The modern girl disrupted the patriarchal status quo throughout the postwar Western and Westernized world through a practical revolution.¹⁷ She expressed emancipation by wearing fewer fabrics for better mobility and greater freedom.¹⁸ And even if it could be assumed the flapper symbolized young emancipated *garçonne*s, the lifestyle became attractive to middle-aged women.¹⁹ Emancipation could also be witnessed through statistics showing a growing number of higher education students. Women's traditional work and pursuits, including housework alongside making and acquiring clothes, were considerably simplified throughout the interwar era. The worldwide distribution of new technologies offered women more time and substantially less work-load and effort for household chores, cooking, and unprecedented food preservation possibilities. The advent of readymade clothing further lessened women's burden effort- and time-wise.²⁰ Sociologist Catherine Cerchez observed in her late-1920s survey of women's professional and educational life in Romania that working women exhibited a slight decrease in marriages. However, she added that in 1929, the number of girls enrolled in professional or secondary schools more than doubled, which seemed proportional to decreased marriages throughout the country.²¹ Yet this situation was not endemic to Romania. The emerging field of social anthropology provided a path for Margaret Mead in the mid-1920s to pursue her field research. Although nowadays "partially discredited," as Moore contended,²² she could be viewed as an example, and arguably justification, for young women seeking a similar career, as seen in the Romanian Sociology School.

¹⁷ Webber, "The Modern Era," 88.

¹⁸ Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), 313.

¹⁹ Moore, *Anything Goes*, 74.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 78.

²¹ Catherine Cerchez, "Munca femeii și consecințele ei pentru familie și societate," *Buletinul muncii* X, no. 1–6 (February 23, 1929): (49–64) 49–52.

²² Moore, *Anything Goes*, 72.

Visually, the 1920s brought about the boyish, board-like silhouette of the modern girl, nicknamed *garçonne* in Francophone settings or flapper in Anglo-Saxon spaces, used interchangeably in Romanian texts dedicated to women and fashion. The prevalent feminine model was Greta Garbo, a hybrid identity between Europe and America, between Parisian elegance and Hollywood glamour. As Moore put it, the messaging coming from “movie stars and society beauties” transmitted globally, wherever the flapper or *garçonne* flourished, was one that “women were constantly on display – and it was their responsibility to make the best of themselves by using the best products they could afford.”²³ Garbo’s image contrasted with *haute couture* romanticism from creators like Jeanne Lanvin, inspired chiefly by eighteenth-century styles. This did not remove the rebellious *garçonne* or flapper from history. The difference was a much earlier model, Egyptomania, prompted by Howard Carter’s 1922 discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb. But the flapper’s ideas did not all relate to the distant past. The era’s inclination towards practicality and simplicity relates to victories in women’s rights and their gradual entrance into public and professional spaces, previously only for men.²⁴ This meant that styles previously deemed indecent or unacceptable, like knee-length skirts and short hair, were now popularized. Indeed, bobbed hair has become the hairstyle most readily associated with the 1920s. A lesser-known connection to this trend was the violent reaction against it, even in Paris.²⁵ Queen Marie of Romania could have played a vital role in this Parisian trend not translating into Romanian. Biographer Guy Gauthier claimed she was likely the first royal woman cutting her hair, following silent movie star Mary Pickford.²⁶ Another Hollywood-propagated female stereotype of the 1920s was the Vamp, a mid-1915 creation attributed to movie star Theda Bara. Considering Bara’s identity as “Al Capone’s favourite actress,” 1920s Hollywood vamps, especially Bara, alongside Gloria

²³ Ibid, 70.

²⁴ Webber, “The Modern Era,” 88.

²⁵ Roberts, “Samson and Delilah Revisited,” 65.

²⁶ Guy Gauthier, *Missy: Reine de Roumanie* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1994), 310.

Swanson or Pola Negri, blurred the boundaries of propriety, morality and strict social structures informing women's lives for centuries. This is especially notable as the beginning of a stage in Hollywood history blending movie stars, gossip, melodrama and various degrees of criminality.

In February 1920, the illustrated monthly *Actualitatea* included a full-page advertisement consisting of a blue-and-grey photograph of a Jeanne D'Arc statue, with writings on all sides. Read clockwise, it presented the "fashion house" *À Jeanne D'Arc*, led by H. Dannhauer, a promise of "exclusive Parisian creations" for dresses, suits, mantles, hats, "high novelties" at its location on Calea Victoriei in Bucharest selling models from "great Parisian houses."²⁷ On an earlier advertisement page, *Actualitatea* included other fashion stores, like *A la Samaritaine*, selling a wide range of products at fixed prices found on Lipscani Street, adjacent to Calea Victoriei, the *Bertheil* stores on Calea Victoriei for "fashion and luxury items" for ladies and gentlemen, or another Lipscani womenswear store, *G.S. Becheanu*, now managed by Mihail I. Tanovici. On the same page, readers were informed that if they could not find "Cassa" Dortheimer's *Henol*, the best hair color-lightening tincture for 10 to 30 lei,²⁸ in drugstores or pharmacies, they should contact the general warehouse.²⁹ This was perfectly congruous with the expanding influence of advertising in the 1920s. As historian Lucy Moore asserted, only in America the number of cosmetic products bought by women grew more than ten-fold between 1915 and 1930.³⁰ This phenomenon was also a symptom of women's growing economic power.

Women had more opportunities to earn enough money to afford such offers, at least partly, even in Romania. According to feminist Maria C. Buțureanu's 1921 social study of women's situation in Romanian, the gender system was built on an apparent duality between urban and rural women, on the same system of gendered social inequality. From this perspective,

²⁷ "À Jeanne D'Arc," *Actualitatea*, February 1, 1920, 32.

²⁸ Around \$0.2 to \$0.5, \$3 to \$8 in 2023.

²⁹ "Ads Page," *Actualitatea*, February 1, 1920, 3.

³⁰ Moore, *Anything Goes*, 70.

urban women were sedentary, decorative, and passive, while peasants were overworked, lacking the right to own their time and possessions.³¹ While nationalistic rhetoric tended to sustain this perspective, urban women became increasingly assertive, locking in their identity as *flâneuses* on Bucharest's high streets, as ambassadors of Romanian beauty and colorful contrast to the men's growing anxiety. In the autumn of the same year, the *Femina* section of the daily *Adevărul* (*The Truth*) included an article on women and industry. The author, signing as Rozina,³² explored the evolution of women's work from domestic to public spheres due to changes in economic and social theories. According to Rozina, the moment women stepped into industrial work, they made a decisive step toward emancipation. Compared to praising Ancient Roman women for pursuing their duties inside the home, Rozina concluded that her contemporaries would find such appreciation inadequate, considering their activities in factories and workshops.³³

Meanwhile across the Atlantic, newspapers celebrated a more established elite women's work. The daily *Arizona Republican* located in Phoenix, Arizona, included a note about "Mrs. B. Frank Mebane,"³⁴ a "prominent Red Cross worker during the World War in France, Servia [Sic] and Roumania," who had befriended Queen Marie of Romania. The anonymous article announced Mebane's future visit to Arizona, purported to wear "a beautiful gown presented to her by Queen Mary of Roumania." The note includes a photograph of Mebane wearing a stylized Romanian folk costume reminiscent of the Queen's style.³⁵ The image was an older portrait of Mebane, published in the *Independent Woman Magazine*³⁶ roughly eight months before its printing

³¹ Maria C. Buțureanu, *Femeia. Studiu Social*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Socec & Co. Bookstore Press, 1921), 51.

³² Most likely Symbolist poet and painter Claudia Milian: Mihail Straje, *Dicționar de pseudonime, anonime, anagrame, astronime, criptonime ale scriitorilor și publiciștilor români* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1973), 446.

³³ Rozina, "Femeia și industria," *Adevărul*, October 14, 1921, 2.

³⁴ Relief worker, politician and socialite Lily Connally Morehead Mebane.

³⁵ "She Was Guest of Roumania Queen," *Arizona Republican*, February 12, 1922, 5.

³⁶ Betty Shannon, "A Royal Business Woman," *Independent Woman Magazine*, June 1921, 18.

in Arizona. Besides these articles, Americans saw the Queen in various promotional illustrated materials, from illustrated boxes and often tabloid-type reports in local dailies to full pages in *Vogue*. But as journalist and writer John Gunther asserted, she was not the one deciding to appear on “cold-cream testimonials, the fountain pen advertisements, the endorsements of jewelry and of beauty shops.” Instead, her likeness was replicated by “unscrupulous secretaries.” Gunther also mentioned a case when the naïve Queen offered an unknown “newspaper woman” her diary, and “diplomatic forces of two continents had to move heaven and earth to keep it from publication.”³⁷ Indeed, Gunther described the Queen as a “cardinal paradox in the whole Rumanian story,” whose “naïveté was beyond belief,” trusting “everybody,” who in turn betrayed her, yet her judgment remained “whole and acute; she was impulsive, tremendously ambitious, and a superb egotist.” Queen Marie’s crafted persona by proxy made her the perfect public figure in modern societies on both sides of the Atlantic. She was a cultural and fashion icon who “knew what she was doing and cared not a hang for consequences.”³⁸ Gunther’s observations were not as visible to average US press readers who viewed the Queen as the ultimate superstar who descended from her ivory European tower to visit and speak to the American people (Fig. 1).

Fashion encompasses creation, manufacture, commerce, and dissemination. Advertisements for textile stores emphasized low prices instead of exclusivity or high quality. The department store chain *Au Bon Goût*, located on Lipscani Street in Bucharest and with branches in Chernivtsi, Timișoara, and Craiova, even claimed there were no lower prices elsewhere in Romania. In April 1921, it published a large ad in *Adevărul* with a list of exclusive offers for its “Holy Easter Exhibition.”³⁹ Fashionable Bucharesters could buy a meter of *crêpe de chine* in “modern colors” for 130 lei, crystalline “for Dresses and Blouses” for 79,90 lei, washable silk for “BLOUSES and lingerie” for 120 lei, *satin oriental* in “assorted colors” for 185 lei, Valencian or Torchons

³⁷ John Gunther, *Not to Be Repeated: Merry-Go-Round of Europe* (R. Long & R. R. Smith, 1932), 423.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 422.

³⁹ “Au Bon Goût Ad,” *Adevărul*, April 26, 1921, 2.

laces between 3.50 and 6.50 lei.⁴⁰ Among finite products, it listed women's white or black *glaçê* gloves starting from 50 lei and thread gloves "in assorted colors" starting from 30 lei.⁴¹ The only cosmetic product advertised was for Jean Marie Farina *eau de cologne*, sold at 20 lei for 250 milliliters, 37.50 lei for half a liter, and 70 lei for a liter.⁴² By summer, *Au Bon Goût* returned to its standard prices, as advertised again in *Adevărul*. The "latest novelties" of the season included fabrics sold by the meter, *Marocain* for 295 lei and *crêpe Mayunga* for 225 lei, both used in "summer dresses, modern colors," the exclusive *crêpe romain* in all shades for ninety-six lei, *crêpe Tchina*, *Pêkinê* for 240 lei, washable crystalline now priced at 125 lei and *crêpe de chine* at 259 lei⁴³. White and *gris perle* *Glaçê* gloves were sold at 50 lei, and women's thread gloves for thirty-five lei⁴⁴. Clients could purchase a lingerie package containing chemises for day and night, *marquisette* trousers, and three pieces of *a jour* handmade embroidery for 875 lei⁴⁵. Below the store's detailed list, an elegant woman putting on powder was pictured in an illustrated box for *Parfumerie Germandrée*, producing perfumes, creams, *eaux de cologne*, and powders.⁴⁶ Conversely, one meter of *crêpe de chine* could buy almost thirty-three loaves of bread and thirteen tons of coal around Christmas in 1922, or nearly forty-seven kilograms of bread and seven tons of coal in the summer of 1923.⁴⁷

The State's taxation policies heavily affected the textile industry's condition in Romania. Taxes in the 1920s were engaged in a steep increase,

⁴⁰ Around \$1.5, \$26 in 2023 for *crêpe de chine*, \$0.9, \$1, 6 in 2023 for *cristalline*, \$1.4, \$24 in 2023 for *silk*, \$2.1, \$36 in 2023 for *satin oriental*, and from \$0.04, \$0.7 in 2023 to \$0.06, \$1 in 2023 for *laces*.

⁴¹ Around \$0.6, \$10 in 2023 for *glaçê* gloves and \$0.3, \$5 in 2023 for *thread gloves*.

⁴² Around \$0.2, \$3 in 2023 for 250 ml, \$0.4, \$7 in 2023 for 500 ml and \$0.8, \$14 in 2023 for 1l.

⁴³ Around \$3, 32, \$57 in 2023 for *Marocain*, \$2.53, \$43 in 2023 for *crêpe Mayunga*, \$1.08, \$18 in 2023 for *crêpe romain*, \$2.7, \$46 in 2023 for *crêpe Tchina*, \$1.41, \$24 in 2023 for washable *cristalline*, \$2.91, \$50 in 2023 for *crêpe de chine*.

⁴⁴ \$0.56 and \$0.39, \$10, and \$7 in 2023.

⁴⁵ \$9.84, \$168 in 2023.

⁴⁶ "Au Bon Goût Ad," *Adevărul*, June 5, 1922, 2.

⁴⁷ Bucharest Mayor's Office, *Anuarul statistic al orașului București pe anii 1915–1923* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curții Regale Göbl, 1924), 162–72.

only to reach their peak in the next decade.⁴⁸ Romanian merchants were forced to trust foreign intermediaries were honest and hoped for the best transport conditions and minimal damages for the merchandise. Legal action was often the only solution to compensate for such losses, at least on paper. Such lawsuits abounded throughout the interwar era on foul play and goods mishandling. For instance, in 1920, Bucharest merchants Henry and Netty Maurer filed a lawsuit against Alfred Hacco from Paris. Several of the Defendant's perfumed oil cans broke, destroying the high-fashion dresses the Maurers imported from Paris. The court assessed the damage to 26,950 francs.⁴⁹ A decade later, the Cornea Bank on Calea Victoriei filed a lawsuit against a Parisian debtor, George Lebel, who failed to present the agreed-upon merchandise by the July 1929 deadline. Damages included 1,453 meters of printed *crêpe de chine*, forty-nine meters of printed *crêpe satin*, and fifty-six meters of plain *crêpe de chine*. The court ordered Lebel to pay 359,781 lei⁵⁰ plus a 24% yearly tax and legal costs.⁵¹

Despite material difficulties and unpredictable outcomes, Romanian merchants still imported raw fabrics, including natural silk as *crêpe de chine*, patterns, and ready-made products, mainly from France. For instance, in 1923, advertisements for *Léon & Adolphe*, claiming to be the only Parisian couturiers in Bucharest, could be seen in most high-life publications, like the *Almanach du High-Life*.⁵² The same almanac of chic Bucharest included a five-page article on recent fashions and advice for the coming months. The article was built on the hypothesis that as ephemeral as fashion could be, women would always be interested in it and wish to keep abreast with the

⁴⁸ Victor Axenciu, *Monedă-Credit-Comerț-Finanțe Publice* (Bucharest: Romanian Academy Press, 2000), 593–4.

⁴⁹ Around \$1, 895, \$28, 909 in 2023. Romanian Parliament, "Anunțuri judiciare," *Monitorul Oficial al Regatului României Addendum*, no. 13 (April 21, 1920): (913–15) 914.

⁵⁰ Around \$2, 149, \$ 39, 262 in 2023.

⁵¹ Romanian Parliament, *Monitorul Oficial al Regatului României III*, no. 91 (April 26, 1930), 5856.

⁵² *Tout-Bucarest. Almanach du High-Life* (Bucharest: Société par "L'Indépendance Roumaine," 1923), 30–44.

newest changes and ideas.⁵³ The author signing as M.R.⁵⁴ further indicated influential Parisian fashion creators, with some liberties in the spelling, turning Lanvin into *Lauvin* and Chanel into *Channel*. Indeed, women's post-war emancipation served political and visual purposes. Women's fashionable image was directly proportional to desirability. More recent theorists have argued that women more commonly dress for each other.⁵⁵ The main driving forces are the desire for competition and to irritate rivals.⁵⁶ From a social and cultural historical lens, women's fashion was an essential cog in any modern society machine. However frivolous fashion may have seemed to interwar Romanian lawmakers, the textile industry was considered a priority for Romania's economic and industrial development in the mid-1920s.⁵⁷ Regardless of the textile industry's perceived importance, the prevailing opinion veered towards criticizing women for their fashion propensity and desire for emancipation and even to become equals to men.

Back to 1923, the *Almanach du High-Life* accommodated an article on Bucharest's worldly life, signed by Le Sphinx, drawing attention to the increasing number of divorces in Romania's capital, approaching the rate in Paris. For the author, allowing women to occupy public spaces freely was a double-edged sword.⁵⁸ The same alarm could be heard more than a decade later, in 1937, this time in the monthly *Magazinul (The Magazine)*,⁵⁹ which may suggest that the issue of divorce, particularly within the context

⁵³ M.R., "La mode," *Tout Bucarest* (See Note 46), (65–70) 65.

⁵⁴ According to Mihail Straje's dictionary of pseudonyms, the only Romanian personality known to use "M.R." was sociologist Mihai Ralea: Straje, *Dicționar de pseudonime*, 406.

⁵⁵ Pamela Church Gibson, "Redressing the Balance: Patriarchy, Postmodernism and Feminism," in *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, eds. S. Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), (349–62) 350.

⁵⁶ Carolyn Beckingham, *Is Fashion a Woman's Right?* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 108.

⁵⁷ C.G. Rommenhoeller, *La Grande-Roumanie. Sa Structure Économique, Sociale, Financière, Politique et Particulièrement Ses Richesses* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1926), 300.

⁵⁸ Le Sphinx, "Mondains, mondaines, mondanités," in *Tout Bucarest* (See Note 46), (58–61) 58–59.

⁵⁹ E., "Alarmă. Cea mai importantă problemă socială: Descrește populația în statele civilizate," *Magazinul*, December 1937, 47–56.

of women's emancipation, was still unsolved and an ideal tool for fear-mongering propaganda. Le Sphinx believed that women's lack of sincerity in relations could extend to their public practices, especially professional ones. Le Sphinx was appalled by this generation of modern girls who aspired beyond the domestic sphere, proving that they know more than men.⁶⁰ The fashionable 1920s silhouette was not spared either. For Le Sphinx, it represented the "voluptuousness of the bones," an abomination of established ideals and parameters of female beauty.⁶¹ It is then safe to argue that the prevalent anti-feminist rhetoric in interwar Romania began a powerful push for women to be pacified since the age of the modern girl. However, as seen in the unchanging alarmist 'news' about divorce rates, not even their evolution into new women could fully satisfy the (male) detractors of women's emancipation. Before the Great Depression dented the modern girl's advance, the 1920s could be seen as a gestation period for increasingly extremist right-wing ideas. These ideologies would define women's role in the coming decade as the new woman.

Despite the unprecedented strides in women's emancipation, 1924 came with the reediting of Zoé Charlotte de Gamond's 1836 book *De la condition sociale des femmes au dix-neuvième siècle*. It was first translated into Romanian in 1854 by Teodor N. Balș, described in 1924 as "Hetman and Knight of several orders Etc. Etc. Etc," printed in Iași at the Romanian-French Press. The 1920s edition was published in Bucharest under the aegis of *Revista Ideii* (*Idea's Review*), led by Marxist anarchist and ideologist Panait Mușoiu.⁶² In the 1924 book's introduction, Mușoiu admitted de Gamond's text was unpalatable to "modern" tastes. Still, her book's traditionalism was "respectable" and "healthy," which he believed was "far from hindering the path of progress, it facilitates it, it actually implies progress."⁶³ Yet the

⁶⁰ Le Sphinx, "Mondains," 58–60.

⁶¹ Ibid, 61.

⁶² Zoé Charlotte de Gamond, *Despre datoria femelior*, ed. Panait Mușoiu, trans. Teodor N. Balș (Bucharest: Biblioteca "Revista Ideii," 1924), front cover.

⁶³ Ibid, 5.

updates Mușoiu announced were mainly linguistic, implying that early-nineteenth-century ideas about women's roles and duties would still apply to the age of the modern girl. On the other side of the gender literature spectrum, writer and feminist Adela Xenopol founded the Society of Romanian Women Writers in 1925 as a response to the Society of Romanian Writers, aiming to support and promote women's literary efforts.⁶⁴ Fashion could become a subject even in Avant Garde publications. In October 1925, the modernist monthly *Integral* included a French-language article by French Surrealist writer René Crevel recounting his visit to Simultaneist artist and designer Sonia Delaunay.⁶⁵ While it may seem an essential stride in acknowledging women's interests, at least in a more radical segment of the Romanian press, the same issue contained a two-page Romanian-language interview with Robert Delaunay, titled *Simultaneism in Art*, which failed to even mention the vital contribution of his partner, Sonia Delaunay, as an artist and designer.⁶⁶ This lack of attention was not accidental. The Romanian Avant-Garde artistic press rarely mentioned Sonia Delaunay in conjunction with her artistic accomplishments and innovations alongside her husband.⁶⁷

Meanwhile in America, the daily *San Antonio Light* published a series of articles it claimed had been authored by Queen Marie, especially for its readers.⁶⁸ Throughout 1925, the American press enthusiastically reported on Parisian-Romanian revue actress Alice Cocéa's marriage with Count Stanislas de La Rochefoucauld (Fig. 2). On page one of *Evening Star*'s Sunday morning edition, among news about a failed assassination attempt on Mussolini,

⁶⁴ Bianca Burța-Cernat, *Fotografie de grup cu scriitoare uitate: proza feminină interbelică* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2011), 25.

⁶⁵ René Crevel, "La mode moderne. Visite à Sonia Delaunay," *Integral – Revistă de sinteză modernă*, October 1925, 18–19.

⁶⁶ Ilarie Voronca, "Simultaneismul în artă. De vorbă cu Robert Delaunay," *Integral – Revistă de sinteză modernă*, October 1925, 2–3.

⁶⁷ Amelia Miholca, *Beyond Tzara: Dada, Constructivism, and Cubism in the Romanian Avant-Garde Magazines* (PhD Thesis, Tempe AZ, Arizona State University, 2021), Accessed May 27, 2022, <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/161627>.

⁶⁸ "A Queen Talks to American Women!" *San Antonio Light*, October 13, 1925, 18; "Europe's Most Famous Queen to Contribute to Light Readers," *San Antonio Light*, October 18, 1925, 1.

the USA's economic policies and postwar debt, or harsh commentary on Sultan al-Atrash's rebellion in Syria, Washington D.C. residents could read that a "young count" married Cocéa, defying his family. According to the anonymous report issued by the *Associated Press*, what made Cocéa anathema to the Count's family was not only her career as a comedy actress. They also rejected her family and ethnic identity, "being a Rumanian and having a brother who is a socialist deputy for Bessarabia."⁶⁹ As reported in the Texan *Brownsville Herald*, at the time, the Count's family even sought assistance from the Pope to forbid the marriage.⁷⁰ The same newspaper announced two weeks later that the Count's father cut him off from his allowance after his marriage to Cocéa (Fig. 3).⁷¹ By January 1926, Arizonians who read the *Douglas Daily Dispatch*'s sports page also discovered that the wedding took place despite all the resistance.⁷² On the same day but in Washington D.C., the *Evening Star* also reported on the wedding, with the news again attributed to the *Associated Press*.⁷³ Douglas residents were also informed in late March that Cocéa had resumed her acting career under her maiden name.⁷⁴ While interest ebbed by late 1926, Romanians still made headlines. In November, *The Indianapolis Times* included another tabloid-style article with Queen Marie as the central character. The newsworthy event was triggered by the Queen slipping while attending Mass and her attitude afterward, retaining her poise.⁷⁵ 1926 was also when prominent interwar Romanian eugenicist Aurel Voina left for the United States of America as a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow. His Fellowship Card included information from 1927,

⁶⁹ Associated Press, "Young Count Defies Family to Wed Star of 'Phi-Phi,'" Socialist's Sister," *Evening Star*, November 5, 1925, 1.

⁷⁰ "Ban Sought," *Brownsville Herald*, November 15, 1925, 3.

⁷¹ "Seeks Job to Wed Actress," *Brownsville Herald*, November 29, 1925, 5.

⁷² "French Count Weds His Music Hall Sweetheart," *Douglas Daily Dispatch*, January 3, 1926, 8.

⁷³ Associated Press, "Comedy Star Weds Aristocratic Count. De La Rochefoucauld Marries Actress in Paris after Much Opposition," *Evening Star*, January 3, 1926, 4.

⁷⁴ "Countess Spurns Title on Her Return to Musical Comedy Is Billed Under Her Maiden Name," *Douglas Daily Dispatch*, March 21, 1926, 13.

⁷⁵ "Queen Slips but Retains Her Poise. Heel Catches in Rug at Roumanian Church and She Falls to Knees," *The Indianapolis Times*, November 18, 1926, 2.

when he began his educational route under the support of the Foundation, as a “special student” in the administration and demonstration of public health, venereal disease control, eugenics, and statistics.⁷⁶ The subsequent resulting 1930 volume on prostitution and venereal diseases, informed by his American studies and research,⁷⁷ marked the beginning of a prolific career as an author, researcher, ideologue, and politician easily known by the new woman but less so by the new (Communist) woman. While Voina was later instrumental in regulating beauty salons and cosmetic institutes, the practice was already a staple of mid-1920s women’s social lives (Fig. 4).

By January 1928, Count Stanislas de la Rochefoucauld reemerged in the US press in an article attributed to United Press reporting from Paris regarding his views as a “loyal defender” of American women. “Count Stanislas” was presented as renowned for his family background and for being “the husband of one of France’s most attractive actresses, Alice Cocea.” According to de la Rochefoucauld, since the last years of the nineteenth century, American women who married “into old French families” deeply impacted Parisian physiognomy and shifted “its pleasures from indoor to outdoor sports.” This is congruent with Anne Hollander’s later observation that women rarely engaged in active or sportive pursuits before the twentieth century, particularly related to leg movement. She asserted that the interwar era abandoned the strict, constricted ideas of fashion and conduct, especially for women, favoring practicality as a form of emancipation by turning formerly perceived impropriety into high fashion.⁷⁸ In the Count’s view, his contemporary American-turned-French women who “really run the society of present day Paris” changed the general social preference from “overcrowded gilded ballrooms” to “cabarets and centers of night life.” As the United Press noted, his assessment was “a criticism of society which turns out to

⁷⁶ The Rockefeller Foundation, “Voina, Dr. Aurel,” IHD, *Rockefeller Foundation Records* (Paris: Rockefeller Archive Center, 1927).

⁷⁷ Aurel Voina, *Prostituția și boalele venerice in Romania* (Bucharest: Göbl and Sons Royal Court Publishing House, 1930).

⁷⁸ Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes*, 339–40.

be a glorification of American women.” In the Count’s view, the demi-mondaine was almost extinct, now replaced by the American *émigrées* or the Americanized Parisienne who becomes “her own best press agent.” 1928 Paris harbored nightlife, “mad dashes from one cabaret to another,” and “the rhythm of music.” American women, as “pals of speed,” while their snobbery and self-centeredness made up for “any lack of intellectual gifts.”⁷⁹ But de la Rochefoucauld’s views did not entirely reflect Parisian reality. Considering his hypothesis about the disappearance of the demi-mondaine, it would be safe to imply that it was more a process of evolution rather than extinction. Parisian socialites changed with the times and adapted to the postwar world. Marthe Bibesco would observe in a 1932 American *Vogue* article that dress had become democratic since fabrics and models previously anathema to the wealthy elites became acceptable for Princesses and noble ladies owing to the fashion revolution spearheaded by Coco Chanel.⁸⁰

Moreover, feminist-type messaging also turned out to be profitable. Throughout the 1930s and roughly until the mid-1935, when censorship on moral grounds decidedly shifted Hollywood’s direction, studios and cinemas worldwide “were only too glad to sell women liberation and modernity for the price of a movie ticket.”⁸¹ From a fashion studies perspective, Bibesco’s assertion would appear in more recent theoretical writings chiefly on street fashion, which, to a certain extent, has engaged in a democratizing process connecting individuals, collectives, or cultures.⁸² And Bibesco’s early-1930s observations would not be lost on any elegance connoisseur in 1928. The late 1920s were cementing the practice of women’s *flânerie*, blending fashion and identity to create modern girls and then new women. The result was new,

⁷⁹ United Press, “Count Defends U. S. Women. ‘Pals of Speed,’ Description of American Wives,” *The Indianapolis Times*, January 26, 1928, 8.

⁸⁰ Marthe Bibesco, “Democracy in Dress,” *Vogue*, March 1, 1932, 76, 96, 98.

⁸¹ Moore, *Anything Goes*, 86.

⁸² Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body. Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge and Maiden: Polity Press, 2000), 208.

fluid, and more subtle exclusivity that could still set fashion icons apart from women donning *prêt-à-porter* models.

In February 1928, the same American edition of *Vogue* published an article by Bibesco titled *The Lure of the Other Woman's Gown*, centered around a certain Odette, one “of those odd women” desiring someone else’s dress. Bibesco recounted a recent visit she paid Odette wearing a “not particularly remarkable” black mousseline dinner dress. Odette was immediately enthralled. The Princess tried to no avail “to disgust her with the garment,” claiming it was an old, common model, likely already present in Odette’s wardrobe. A proper dinner dress was exactly the one item Odette had forgotten to account for in her overflowing travel wardrobe. And then the inevitable, dreaded question came, whether Bibesco would allow Odette to copy her dress, despite knowing already “from experience” that she *did* mind. Odette was unmoved by her friend’s “revolt against her tactlessness” with a “disapproving shudder.” But in the end, Bibesco knew she would yield and send Odette her dress the next day, foreseeing her friend’s ultimate disappointment. As Bibesco explained, no matter how many new dresses she copies from her friends and acquaintances, she could never become another person by simply stealing dress patterns. Bibesco was sure that Odette saw herself as her double, claiming she “evidently fears for me, whom she copies, what she does not fear for herself, the annoyance of being another person’s reflection.” In Bibesco’s understanding, Odette never understood why the Princess blushed when meeting her “for lacking that delicacy that forbids bringing the original and the copy together in the same place.” Odette abhorred the same dress at a couturiere unless worn by one of her friends. In Bibesco’s opinion, Odette had no taste as “her mania is altogether guileless.” Odette’s extensive wardrobe disgusted Bibesco. Odette’s dresses did not reflect “the true air,” but that of the false, that of a copy. Her unchanging habit prevents her from learning “for herself, how to dress.” Indeed, what Bibesco termed “the science of good taste in dress” needs painstaking work. Otherwise, it is lost. And, Bibesco concluded, constantly tried to drag her friends into this practice “like every

one who falls into her weakness [...] by way of excuse." When asked if she wanted any of Odette's dresses, the Princess promptly answered, quoting Alfred de Vigny, that she liked "only what I need never see twice."⁸³

Sometime in the mid-to-late 1920s, writer C.L. Flavian visited the United States. Among his impressions, published as a book in 1932, he detailed a Hollywood visit, where he was allowed to watch how an aviation scene with actor Conrad Nagel was filmed in an unnamed studio. As Flavian noted, the public would probably believe Nagel was genuinely flying when watching the movie in "Bucharest, Paris or Angorra [Sic]" five or six months later. Movie stars' fashion choices and projected personalities were treated similarly, justifying the sometimes-exaggerated effort to separate the actual person from the artist. Flavian experienced this reluctance firsthand. After visiting Hollywood, he concluded that meeting the Pope in an intimate or personal environment at the Vatican was much easier than catching a glimpse of Greta Garbo. Still, he was allowed to visit the dressing rooms of certain movie stars, Garbo included, but only in their absence.⁸⁴

Literary and art critic Petru Comarnescu published his American impression volume titled *Homo americanus*⁸⁵ a year later at the Vremea publishing house within the Criterion collection, of which he was a founding member. Like Flavian's book mentioned above, Comarnescu's frame of reference suggests 1920s realities. Comarnescu's comments are more relevant to the modern girl than the new woman, mainly as the book includes a chapter dedicated specifically to what he termed the "modern girl." Comarnescu used the terms "modern girl" and "modern woman," most likely as an umbrella term for the generalized idea of "modern girl" applied to women throughout the interwar era⁸⁶ and may include aspects of the modern girl and new woman symbols as defined in this paper.

⁸³ Marthe Bibesco, "The Lure of the Other Woman's Gown," *Vogue*, February 1, 1928, 69.

⁸⁴ C.L. Flavian, *Impresii Din America* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1932), 34–35.

⁸⁵ Petru Comarnescu, *Homo Americanus* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1933).

⁸⁶ See Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

Comarnescu described “modern women” as “club women” or “the Americans,” in its essence a variation of the American modern man avatar.⁸⁷ He considered the “modern woman” model as divorced from the Romanian and Oriental ideals. She was no longer a mother or nanny and lacked the desire to equal men intellectually. She dedicated her freedom to activities “within the broad framework of nation and humanity” and “effectively controls her homeland’s destiny.”⁸⁸ The author envisioned the possibility of instituting a matriarchal system in the United States, considering the numerous decisive victories in women’s emancipation. In his view, women exercised their power by joining clubs with general and specific purposes.⁸⁹

When painting the portrait of the “modern girl,” Comarnescu used the example of Helen Thomas, an independent-minded student who attempted to convince him of the importance money played for American women. Thomas claimed that beauty was irrelevant if not accompanied by brilliance of mind and heart. Comarnescu expressed his disdain towards American women’s material preoccupation by using another illustration, Miss Carr, who reluctantly agreed to meet him after a string of vehement refusals. While already rich, Miss Carr supported applied arts, interior design, and advertising illustration specifically in search of profit. When Thomas heard his objection, she called Comarnescu a “European snob” who refused to accept anything that did not fit into his value system.⁹⁰ He believed Americans to be more physically and emotionally robust, although young women seemed less “ruled by Puritanism” than young men. The “configuration” of this American “new girl” resulted from the fact that interracial individuals were prone to “earlier development and maturation.”⁹¹ Flavian drew similar conclusions about American gendered realities. He believed the term “romance” in an American context had lost its initial “idyll, love, ideal” tone in favor of “flirt, romance

⁸⁷ Dorian Branea, *Statele Unite ale Românilor: Cărțile călătoriilor românești în America în secolul XX* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017), 113.

⁸⁸ Comarnescu, *Homo Americanus*, 50.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 51–52.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 148–50.

⁹¹ Ibid, 154.

and sex=appeal [Sic]," as women were more open to "escaping from the country of prohibited liberties."⁹² However, as libertine as the "multiracial" American young woman may seem, Flavian asserted that her existence was centered around respectability, with deep roots in her Puritan descent.⁹³ Filtering the "modern American girl" through a "fundamentally Romanian interpretation"⁹⁴ for Comarnescu or, to a lesser extent, the American woman type, as depicted by Flavian, inherently differ from modern girls and new women in Romania. Despite more relaxed gendered segregation for the latter regarding education, profession, and socializing, they were still confined within strict limits of morality and acquiescence to social, political, and ecclesiastical authorities, from traditionalists to right-wing extremists.

1929 – A Bridge to the New Woman

The modern girl did not disappear immediately after the Great Depression. Rhythms of tango and jazz, alongside Hollywood and Parisian fashion icons, continued to spark women's imagination worldwide. However, as Moore asserted, "most women of Zelda's generation" viewed the flapper identity as "a stage, rather than a Faustian pact."⁹⁵ Therefore, the flapper/*garçonne* in Bucharest was at least unconsciously aware she would eventually grow out of this "rebellious phase." The modern girl parading on Bucharest's Calea Victoriei still hoped to become a movie star as she nonchalantly paraded between shops at noon, cinemas in the evening, or clubs at night. However, the discourse against her physical and behavioral traits gained traction as the decade approached its end.

An article on winter season fashions published in the illustrated weekly *Realitatea Ilustrată* (*The Illustrated Reality*) announced the fashionable woman's

⁹² Flavian, *Impresii*, 93–94.

⁹³ Ibid, 95.

⁹⁴ Branea, *Statele Unite ale Românilor*, 100.

⁹⁵ Moore, *Anything Goes*, 78.

metamorphosis into a “genuine lady” in October 1929.⁹⁶ The changes were already visible in high fashion creations (Fig. 5), including the emphasis on natural lines and an elongated, curvy aesthetic achieved through cuts, as perfected by Madeleine Vionnet. Synthetic and elastic threads and fabrics like Lastex were already present, especially in lingerie designs offering neat silhouette lines. The hem’s progressive elongation continued until the mid-1930s.⁹⁷ Assunta’s article indeed announced a radical change. Longer skirts would need an increasing amount of material. The waist had also significantly risen above the tighter hips. As Assunta contended, this fresh style emphasized an equally novel type of femininity. However, women’s pressure to attain this silhouette could also pose obstacles to movement. Overall, there was a tendency to return to impressionist folds reminiscent of Renoir or Manet, using everything fashion had gained in the past decades and hence only accessible to affluent women. Assunta concluded by advising readers to avoid anything that appeared cheap or easy to copy. For this reason, the author identified the rare sights of fur coats in Paris or Berlin because social and economic elite women abhorred the idea of even looking like those wearing imitations.⁹⁸

Aside from active feminists, the eugenicists’ most feared enemies listed as “disgenic factors” were women who were “middle class, educated and with feminist tendencies.”⁹⁹ This generalized category could include most fashion-consuming mid-interwar Romanian modern girls, soon to become new women. Nevertheless, texts addressed to women, especially those that qualify as advice literature, treat women’s emancipation in an increasingly ambiguous manner, especially in conjunction with subjects dealing with representation or national pride. Not entirely discarding the modern girl’s rebellious, assertive nature, the new woman was to become a “female hero”

⁹⁶ Assunta, “Moda iarna,” *Realitatea Ilustrată*, October 26, 1929, 31.

⁹⁷ Webber, “The Modern Era,” 91.

⁹⁸ Assunta, “Moda iarna,” 91.

⁹⁹ Maria Bucur, “Mișcarea eugenista și rolurile de gen,” in *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești*, eds. Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu (Iași: Polirom, 2002), (107–47) 116.

and an elegant *flâneuse* emanating modernity and dissimulated prosperity on the grand tourist-friendly boulevards like Calea Victoriei, Bucharest's main artery. Physical, aesthetic, and national selection were applied on a vast spectrum, from winners of internationally-affiliated *Miss* beauty pageants presented as ambassadors of Romanian beauty to professional or scientific achievements and records achieved by women despite direct opposition from both decision factors and colleagues or Rockefeller fellows offered the occasion to pursue advanced studies at prominent institutions in Europe and especially the USA. The mention of beauty pageants above is not accidental. As Eric Hobsbawm asserted, beauty queens operated like athletes in representing the idealized, imagined nation,¹⁰⁰ adding a calculated flavor of personal charm. From their very inception, beauty pageants were intricately linked to eugenic and social selection ideas. As modern versions of debutante balls, interwar *Miss* pageants can be interpreted through a eugenic lens as presenting a row of young, unmarried women that decreased after each stage of selection on physical aspect, intelligence, and morality until the candidate who best embodied the organizers' and jury's ideals was crowned as the winner.¹⁰¹ Lizica Codreanu, the sister of sculptor Irina Codreanu,¹⁰² represented a more complex example encompassing fashion, art, health, and an orientation toward Indian spiritual practices. She began her career as a modernist dancer, connected to Constantin Brâncuși and Sonia Delaunay¹⁰³ in the 1920s as a modern girl. She was then among France's first hatha yoga instructors, beginning in the 1930s, as a new woman.

¹⁰⁰ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 143.

¹⁰¹ See Andraș, "Beauty and Nation: Miss Romania as International Ambassador," in *Studies on Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue*, ed. Iulian Boldea, vol. 1 (Târgu-Mureș: Arhipelag XXI Press, 2013), 424–31.

¹⁰² Doina Lemny, *Lizica Codreanu, o dansatoare româncă în avangardă pariziană* (Bucharest: Vellant, 2012).

¹⁰³ See Andraș, "Fashioning Simultaneous Migrations: Sonia Delaunay and Inter-War Romanian Connections," *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty* 13, no. 2 (December 1, 2022): 229–53, https://doi.org/10.1386/csf_00047_1.

Despite ideological and financial difficulties, Bucharest advertising spaces continued to be studded with references to “fashion houses” selling “the latest Parisian models.” *Realitatea Ilustrată* had the budget and national spread to offer agreeable deals to companies and manufacturers. Its advertisements running throughout 1929 for the *I Schőenfeld* hat salons were edited as a multi-faceted article. It not only described the offer and significant demand for the hats and the fact that it reproduced the models from the latest Parisian fashion journals, but it was also the best way to overcome the monetary crisis while also connecting it to the *Miss Romania* contest organized by *Realitatea Ilustrată*. According to the ad, the era belonged both to the Great Depression and to beauty pageants. True beauty should be sought. For this, women should stop consuming cosmetic products and instead choose the ‘magnificent’ *Schőenfeld* hats. Because of this, the ad continues, it can be explained why there is a so-called ‘acute pilgrimage’ to these salons. Every day, the salons added new clients worthy of sharing tastes with the magazine’s *Miss Romania* 1929, Magda Demetrescu (Fig. 6).

Meanwhile, the Romanian Tailoring Academy offered remote specialized womenswear creation courses created and accredited by the Academy’s then-President, D. Theodorescu. Interested individuals could also pay an annual fee of two hundred lei¹⁰⁴ for a monthly subscription to the technical and professional *Croitorie și artă* (*Tailoring and Art*).¹⁰⁵ The Academy extended its publishing endeavors in the next decade, including twelve specialized guides starting in 1932. They covered various aspects of tailoring and couture, with an added pocket guide summarizing all eleven volumes. Thus began an era when women were encouraged to choose fitting and elegant garments and accessories and *create* them themselves. As 1929 progressed into the 1930s, the idea of austerity gained traction in fashion in an avant-la-lettre version of what would be understood as the DIY (Do It Yourself) phenomenon. The Academy’s guides came to complete genuine beauty manuals authored by

¹⁰⁴ Around \$1.2 in 1929, \$21 in 2023.

¹⁰⁵ D. Theodorescu, Ad for *Croitorie și artă* (*Tailoring and Art*), 1929.

self-proclaimed specialists coming from medical, even eugenic fields. For example, two volumes published almost at the end of the interwar era, in 1938, were added to the new woman's arsenal, even after her post-1948 reinvention. One was Aurel Voina's *Îngrijirea tenului (Skincare)*,¹⁰⁶ within a series of books on cosmetics. It associated beauty with eugenics, a connection that would disappear when the collection was reedited as a single book in 1959.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, R. Vior's premium edition of *Fii frumoasă doamnă (Be Beautiful Madam)*¹⁰⁸ covered fashion and cosmetic instructions matching some of Voina's technical ideas but leaving out eugenic references.

Conclusion

The 1920s brought about an unprecedented shift during modernity in women's behavior and political agency, which was most visible through the silhouette of the *garçonne* or flapper. In Romania, the modern girl embodying French and Anglo-Saxon influences was the precursor and trailblazer of following feminine models, namely the interwar and Communist new women. Modern girls were born out of postwar trauma with an aggressive need for emancipation and recognition, undressing nineteenth-century norms of propriety and social constructions. While the new woman's prerogative would have been to redress the gendered balance, the modern girl's disruption severely shook the patriarchal status quo and could never be reversed. In her identity construction, the Romanian modern girl blended notions of the elegant *Parisienne* with the growing popularity of the Hollywood diva, adding national and local flavors. In jazz rhythms, with newly-gained freedom of movement and amid cigarette smoke, the modern girl paraded confidently throughout the 1920s until the Great Depression. But her soul and desires would continue in the twentieth century's diverse palettes and rhythms.

¹⁰⁶ Voina, *Îngrijirea tenului* (Bucharest: Cugetarea – Georgescu Delafras, 1938).

¹⁰⁷ Idem, *Îngrijirea tenului și a părului* (Bucharest: Medicală, 1959).

¹⁰⁸ R. Vior, *Fii frumoasă doamnă* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1938).

Illustrations

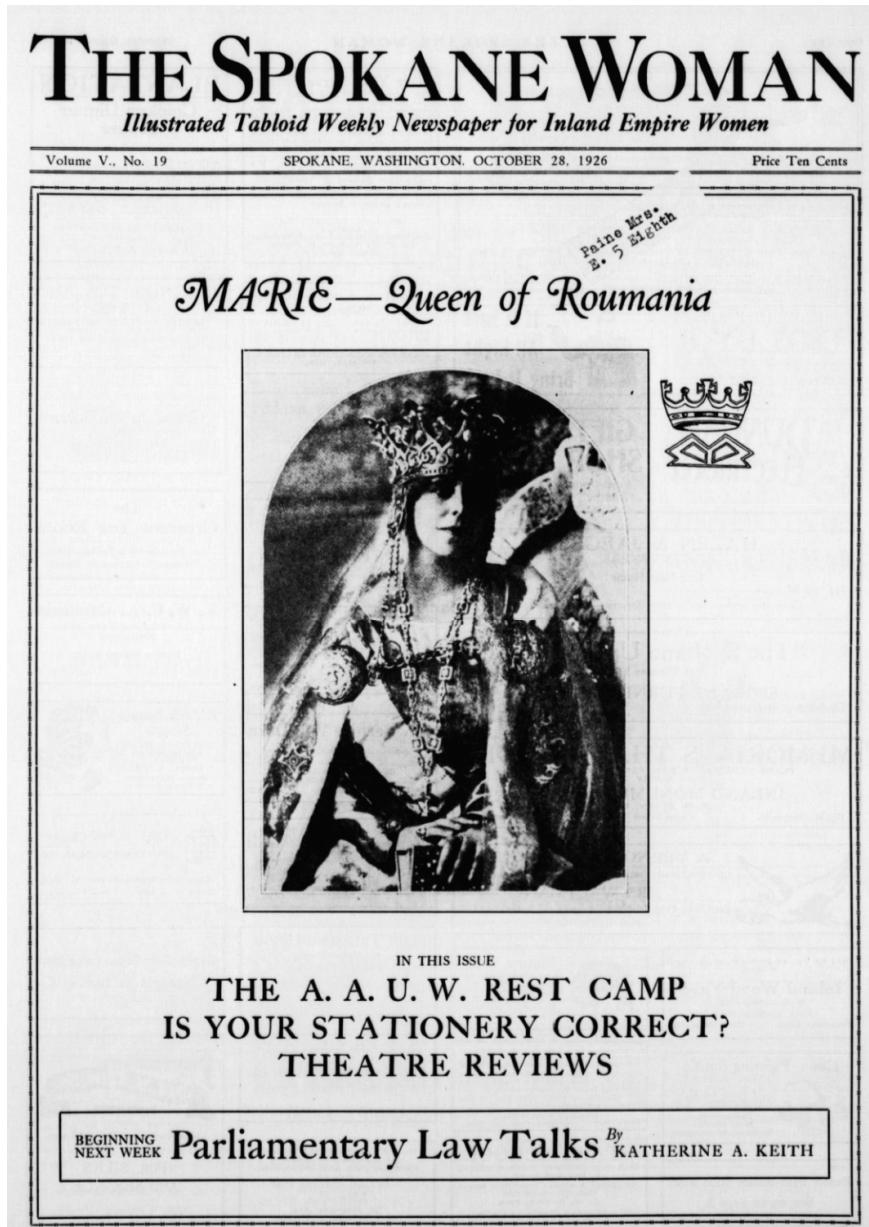


Fig. 1. Queen Marie on the cover of *The Spokane Woman*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Front cover, *The Spokane Woman*, October 28, 1926.



Fig. 2. Alice Cocéa and Count de Stanislas de la Rochefoucauld, press photograph (Agence Rol). Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Fig. 3. 1925 *Brownsville Herald* article on Cocéa's wedding¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "Seeks Job to Wed Actress."



Fig. 4. Women in a Romanian beauty salon, 1926. Personal Collection



Fig. 5. Haute couture models from late 1928.
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France ¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Celine, "La mode et les grands couturiers," *La femme de France*, October 21, 1928, 12.



Fig. 6. From left to right: Checkered blue and grey *leinage* skirt with a *gris argent crêpe de chine* plastron. Natural *Kasha* ensemble. A pleated panel gives amplitude to the skirt in front; open jacket with a lemon-color pullover and knotted collar. Skirt-mantle in grey *leinage* with chevron cuts, blue doubling; collar with a ribbon. Ensemble created from two *leinage* tones in grey Angorra; the vest's garnishes have the same color as the skirt¹¹²



Fig. 6. Realitatea Ilustrată – Miss Romania, Magda Demetrescu, 1929. Personal Collection

¹¹² Monique, "Moda," *Domnița*, February 8, 1929, 8–9.